

70781

2013

LETTER THE FIRST  
ADDRESSED TO THE  
DELEGATES  
From the several CONGREGATIONS  
OF  
PROTESTANT DISSENTERS  
WHO MET AT DEVIZES  
ON SEPTEMBER 14, 1789.

---

“Nor am I afraid or ashamed to profess, that I highly disapprove of the Conduct of those, who are continually inveighing against Establishments in general, and drawing odious comparisons between the Members of the Church of England and the Dissenters.”

Answer of Rev. Robert Gore at Manchester,  
August 23, 1770.

---

SECOND EDITION, WITH ADDITIONS.

---

SALISBURY:  
PRINTED AND SOLD BY E. EASTON;

SOLD ALSO BY  
MESSRS. WILKIE,  
Nº 71, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD,  
LONDON.

1790.





---

## RESOLUTIONS

Of the DELEGATES from the several Congregations  
of PROTESTANT DISSENTERS,

Who met at DEVIZES on Sept. 14, 1789,

1. That, as Protestant Dissenters, we entertain no principles which are inconsistent with the welfare of the present Government, our attachment to which has not been exceeded by any description of men whatever, as was honourably attested in the late debates on this business in the House of Commons even by our warmest opponents.

2. That we conceive it therefore a manifest injustice to be incapacitated from holding offices of trust, honour, and emolument, unless we comply with the requisites of those laws; and that more especially, as no Religious Test is required for holding the offices either in Scotland or Ireland.

3. That,

3. That, as Englishmen, we feel for the disgrace which those laws bring upon the National Character for liberty, good sense, and humanity; by unjustly stigmatizing a numerous body of well-deserving men, and depriving them of their rights and privileges; by imposing this Test upon the execution of some offices, and not requiring it in others, without any reasonable ground of distinction; and by affording no additional security to the Constitution either civil or ecclesiastical, which they were intended to defend; and lastly, by inflicting on those who fill such offices without taking the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper within a limited time, agreeably to the rites of the Church of England, a very heavy penalty, and such severe disabilities, as ought only to be annexed to the most atrocious crimes.

4. That, as Christians, we lament the existence of Laws so dishonourable to Religion, and so prejudicial to it's interests; by prostituting an Institution, which, in the views of it's Great Founder, had no other object than the spiritual advantage of mankind; and thus tending to destroy the reverence due to the sacred ordinances of the Gospel.

5. That actuated therefore by principles of justice towards ourselves, a regard for the national character, and a concern for the purity of a Christian Institution, we are  
ready



ready to concur in every wise and constitutional measure for the repeal of such oppressive, dishonourable, and pernicious statutes.

6. That we heartily approve the measures already adopted by the London Committee to obtain their repeal; and whilst we return them our warmest acknowledgments, we earnestly exhort and call upon them to spare no pains, to be discouraged by no repulses, but to persevere in the use of all lawful methods, until the voice of truth be heard, and our just and reasonable demands be granted.

FINIS.

*Lately published,*

Price ONE SHILLING,

**A SECOND LETTER** addressed to the  
DELEGATES from the PROTESTANT DISSEN-  
TERS who met at Devizes on Sept. 14, 1789.

By the AUTHOR of the FIRST LETTER.



---

**M**EN of reflection know, that Religion cannot so far repress moral disorders, as of itself, and without Civil Government, to maintain the common peace of men ; they know too, that Civil Government cannot ensure the observance of moral and even of civil duties in that extent, which the steady maintenance of publick welfare requires, without taking the aid of some Sanctions, which It has not, but Religion has.

For these reasons, when they are duly traced and understood, it will not appear an extraordinary fact, that no Civil Society ever yet subsisted in any age or country, without a Religion established by Law. And of course, our own Publick Fathers, in the step they took of establishing both Religion and Government by Law, will seem to have proceeded justly upon the reason of the things, and the common sense of mankind.

Under the Institution of Christ, there was actually formed a Religious Society, with Rites, Officers, Ministers ; and That was invested with Sanctions of a Spiritual nature to carry on its own administration ; and it stood

independent of Civil Society, yet capable, and with much advantage both to the State and itself, of association with it.

That Religious Society, so constituted by its Divine Author, is what we call the Christian Church; and by powers of its own and by process of an administration of itself, it had gradually been conducted to such a state of Protestant-Doctrines and Protestant-Worship, that the Bulk of English people conscientiously held to it at that time, when it became actually associated with the Civil Government of the country, and the State and Church of England were established by Law in one federal Constitution; with due regards had to the real rights of Each, and with views to the attainment of the utmost publick happiness possible, by the concurrent operation of Both.

If the passions of men have sometimes perverted such a Constitution to the purposes of oppression in either of its component departments, occasional Abuses of this sort seem hardly to warrant exception to the Thing. They shew that men may be bad, but they shew nothing more. That the Legal Establishment in both its parts, when used lawfully, may still be incomparable in publick utility and value, is a principle in support of  
which



which the appeal may be confidently made to experience.

If there is to be *no* established Church, what will be the dreadful consequence, but that divers Sects of Christians will break out again in conflict?

On view of such a consequence let every man pause—let him think of a Legislature split into parties, under *interests* all struggling, all *dearer* than other interests, all irreconcilable too—let him think of the Religious Quarrel kindling the flame, and every one of the many aspiring Sects in contest concurring to blow up the fire—Under an establishment of *one* national Church, their struggle is but an innocent spark; with *no* established Church, it is a conflagration, wasting wide and raging on, no man can foresee how long, till it be stopped—by an Establishment again—for that alone can, and that assuredly will, end it. “What havock did the Presbyterians make with their Covenant-uniformity, their *Jure Divino* discipline, and their rigid prohibition of reading the old Service-Book! And though the Independents had a better notion of the rights of Conscience, how defective was their *Instrument of Government* under Cromwell! How arbitrary the proceedings of their *Try-*

*ers!* How narrow their list of Fundamentals! And how severe their restraints of the press!" Such are a Dissenter's exclamations on sight of struggles to put another Church-establishment in the place of one that had been overturned. And no man, I humbly conceive, judging either from repeated experience, or from the present number and temper of Christian parties in this country, can reasonably expect any consequences but the same, if an overthrow of the Church-establishment should recur. But as the Church, now established, in point of *truth*, and in point of *numbers*, is not *less deserving*, to say no more, than any other Body of Christians in the country, and is, by right of Law, and with abundant evidence given of Civil Utility, in settled possession, can it be adviseable, even in Political prudence only, to displace the establishment of That, when its removal will but give occasion to the establishment of another? Why should innovation be hazarded, when there is scarcely a possibility but that the same thing will recur under another name, and that, after the conflict and agitation of the kingdom? As uniformity of worship and opinions in Religion is a thing that cannot be expected, and ought not to be enforced, the clear way to public  
peace



peace lies, and only lies, in the establishment of *One* Church, and the Toleration of *the Rest*. There is no religious Liberty assignable, of which These are not sufficient means — in Them we have found the real Remedy for religious disorders; and of little weight, in a civil scale, is an objection that it is administered by *this* hand, or by *that*. The hand that is and has been found successful, is of all the most fit to be trusted, when it cannot be but that some hand must be employed.

A settled Establishment, in Church and State, forms the Constitution of England; and Some of those, who are born under it, submit to it only *in part*, and the Rest stand attached to it *throughout*. As there is indisputably a difference in the nature of the two cases, it should seem that the Legislature of the country would act agreeably to common sense, if it adjusted the treatment of these different cases to the respective nature of each; and if, considering both of these parties as friends, but unequally so, it maintained a characteristical distinction between *those* who do not hold to the Constitutional Establishment but under some *reserves*, and *others* who hold to it under none. Nor would it seem equitable in *the former*, to expect that they

they should be placed upon a footing precisely the same with that of *the latter*; this only would appear just, that both should be treated according to the nature of their respective case; the One party with all sufferance because it is possible and safe, the Other with preference, because it is natural and fair. Upon this principle men think and act in every walk of life; and if it be equitable in Individuals, it is not easy to see what can make it wrong in the Publick.

And indeed, in the justice of this principle there appears a general acquiescence. The members of the Roman Catholick Communion are debarred from some civil advantages; and this is not, I think, reputed unjust by any Protestants of this country. Though adherents to the Church of Rome, cannot, as such, undertake subjection to *one* part of the Constitution of England, still under the *other* part of it they are permitted by an undertaking of allegiance to stand as subjects, but with certain restrictions.

Separation from the Religious part of the British Constitution seems then allowed to be a reason justly conclusive against them; and it really appears the *only* reason for that limitation as to civil privileges, under which they stand. Can any Protestant assign *other* reasons



sons for it? Can he say that they are not as *trusty* subjects of the Civil Constitution as he is? Can he urge that they are so treated upon a principle of punishment? If he should assert either the one thing or the other, what will he shew but that hatred stirring in his bosom, which is the genuine mother of the persecuting spirit. All that ought to be said is, that their undertaking as subjects of the Constitution is not *complete*, and therefore that they are not, and justly are not, *completely* privileged under it.

If it be allowedly just to subject members of the Romish Communion to certain limitations as to their civil situation in the country, for this single reason, because they are not of the Church of England; how can the Legislature of this land be charged with an infringement of equity, in having put differences against other Christians also for not having acceded to the Church of England?

The wrong done, if any, must lie in the differences, rather than in the principle.

Not in the principle.—For will any man say, that such a proceeding contradicts any right that is properly *religious*? For such an objection there seems no assignable ground. Every man is left at full liberty to worship God, at the times and according to the form,  
which

which his own sense of duty prescribes. Of him God requires this; and of human government God requires nothing more, than that none of his servants should be restricted from performing all conscientious duty to him. Where men are in actual possession of this liberty, the plea of right, that is properly *religious*, has obtained satisfaction and must stop; if it be pushed on in further pursuit, the nature of it is changed; it is become of another cast, and bears immediate reference to the things of *this* world, rather than to the things of *another*.

Will such a proceeding violate any other rights, to which the Separatist from the Church of England may urge a justifiable claim? No: for his only rights are, Religious Liberty, because it is made his due by the plain will of God; and civil protection, because he is intitled to it by virtue of civil obedience. In civil Society no subject has any rights but these.

Has the Established Church of England less to apprehend from one description of Separatists from it, than from another? Not less, if to change it be, as there is reason to think it is, the common principle and common endeavour of them all. Some have been so fair as to own this, though with something



thing of reluctance, others have been so bold as to avow it with vehemence.

It seems, then, that no person, who stands detached from any component part in the Constitutional Establishment of England, has just ground to expect, that no more reserves should be held towards him, than are held towards another, whose accession to it is not partial, but complete. It rather appears, that reserves may be exercised towards the one, and preferences given to the other, consistently with justice to both; or, that the principle, on which such differences are put, is right.

If then that Injustice, which is imputed to the proceeding, does not lie in the Principle itself, it must, if any where, lie in the Differences.

Such differences cease to be just, only when they are *greater*, than the necessity of the case requires.

Pains and Penalties would indeed be *greater*; for dissent from the Established Church of this country, is no proper object of *Punishment*.—But of such Pains and Penalties or of Punishment, have any Dissenters, as such, present reason to complain? I think I may be sure that they have not.

Is there any thing *penal* in exclusion from Civil Offices of Trust and Power? No; such

B

exclusion

exclusion is but a natural consequence of the want of qualification; and whoever is not well-affected to the Legal Constitution of the country in all its parts, in fact and in reason incurs real want of qualification; and becomes of course and of right ineligible to hold a power to affect it. Interested as he is apparently, and it may be avowedly, against something in the Constitutional Building, can he be considered as *fit* to take situations, that may impower him, in any degree, to act in pulling down? He may think himself, and he may be, eligible in point of Ability; in point of Principle, however, he is not: and if other men, as friends to the Establishment in all its parts, are eligible whilst he is not, it is no more Punishment to him, than it is Reward to them. In both instances the consequence is natural. Men may accumulate words for ever, but this is the amount of the case; and it holds, down from the Chief Magistrate himself to all in authority under him.

Is there any thing *penal* in the Obligation of those, who are not of the Church of England, to contribute to the support of its Ministry?

No person in Civil Society has a right to territorial property, or to the produce of it,  
upon



upon other terms, than are consistent with the publick good; nor could he have at first obtained, or from time to time have held, possession of them, without the award and protection of Society. So that Government, in reserving and applying to the maintenance of the Church of England-Ministry, which is a publick order in the State, a fixed portion of territorial produce, only reserves and applies what was and is *national* property. And upon *all* citizens, as such, the obligation, to stand to this civil appointment, holds as strong, as to contribute to any other heads of publick expenditure. It is no punishment to Dissenters, as such, if they, as citizens, are held to an obligation, equally incumbent upon *all*, that are citizens. If some among them dislike the objects and services, for which the provision is made, this is accidental, and will not warrant a complaint of *penal* treatment.

As nothing, that can be truly called *violation of right*, or *punishment*, has yet appeared in the situation of Dissenters in this country, the Church of England-man seems to stand at full liberty to abide by the following principle.

It rests, *of right*, with the sense of the Country expressed in Law, to fix, in every

case, any such *limitations*, as it may require; to determine respecting every office, from the highest to the lowest, with what *measures of power*, on *what conditions* only, and by *what description* only of persons, it shall be tenable, and to make standing provision for *national services*, of every kind, out of the *national substance*, in whatever hands it may lie.

Upon the principle of *Right* in the Legislature to do all this and more, leans in fact the whole Constitution of the Country. If the Legislature had not made, for the sake of the Publick, any *such* exercises of the *Right* it has, there might indeed be advantages gained by many Individuals; advantages, for possession of which they will long, and for want of which they will complain. So much I can easily see; but any *Right* they have to claim them, or any *punishment* they undergo in not having them, neither can I see, nor can they shew.

The few preceding reflections seem to throw some light upon the question respecting the Test; and if truth be in them, there can appear no ground for representing That as a *penal* thing, and as a *wrong* done to any description of men in Civil life. Enough therefore perhaps has been said already;



ready; especially as *old* objections only to the Test are now revived, and with no great novelty of phrase. But still, it may be advisable, that a Church of England-man should, on his part, rather go on in reviving and reasserting *old* answers, than rest entirely silent on that particular head.

Let us then take a view of objections made to the Test.

1. It is sometimes represented as a violation of *natural rights*.

But let men understand what *natural rights* were, and what must become of them under Civil Society. Men, even when living in a state of nature as equals without Civil Government, had not the *right* to do what they pleased, and when, and how, if *their* doing it affected *others*, and clashed with *rights* of *theirs*. Much more then, men, in subjection to Civil Society, must be disabled from holding to any *right*, in bar of the *right* of Society, to controul all *rights* of subjects for the good of the Whole.

If it be said of men, that they have real *rights* to which they can lay claim, it may be said too of an Established Constitution in Church and State, that It can lay claim to a real *right* of requiring from every man, who may come to hold a power to affect it in  
either

*either* of its parts, a timely assurance that he is well-disposed to it in *Both*. And if the *Rights* of Individuals are to be put in counterballance with the *Rights* of a Whole Constitution, can there remain a doubt, which, in point of justice, ought to turn the scale? The proper language of every good subject of Society would, as it seems to me, be this; "I dare not call *any right* in me paramount to *that* in the Publick; it only is my *natural right* to stand fair for every thing, under the Constitutional Establishment of the country, upon the *same* conditions that other subjects do; and I do not dispute the real *right* of the Publick, to determine *what* those conditions shall be."

2. Another objection is, that the Test-Act makes a *Religious* criterion operate, as it ought not, to *Civil* disqualification.

The distinction here made is in *words*, but not in *things*. It is only Civil Power, from which any push against the Church of England need be apprehended: and as that Church stands associated with the State in a common interest, to convey Civil Power into no hands, but such as are assuredly known to be *friendly* to the Church-Establishment, is to put prevention of damage to it in the proper and indeed in the only place. Of the proceeding of  
the



the State, in this point, the construction seems to be this; "convince me that you are a friend to that interest, against which, for good publick reasons, no power of mine (which is the only thing that can enable you to affect it at all) must be applied; and then, you shall stand no less *eligible* to exercise power under me, than other men. You may be a friend to me; but if you are not as much a friend to that interest, as I am and shall continue to be, then, any Power to separate between me and that interest must not come from me to you."

3. It is also objected, that under the Test men are debarred from the common Eligibilities of citizens, merely on account of Religious Opinions.

As this bears affinity to the objection immediately preceding, the answer to that may have some application here. Let me, however, add a word or two further.

If, under the Test, men are debarred from the common eligibilities of citizens, this does not happen, as far as I can perceive, *merely* on account, or even *at all* on account, of Religious Opinions. Of Them there subsists a free and indiscriminating Toleration; nor does the Test bear immediate reference to them, for being whatever they are. The only

only aim of the Test is, to ascertain, simply, whether they are the same with those in actual Establishment. If not, what a thing, *in such a case*, is any trust of Executive Power? Common to every Sect has been found the Principle, of endeavouring to establish itself on the ruin of all other Sects; and sure destruction will it work of all the Civil Peace and Happiness, hitherto found accruing from an Establishment of One party of Christians, with a Toleration of all the Rest. In justice, then, not only to our Civil Society at large, but even to every Christian Sect in particular, ought the door of Eligibility to stand open, by which such a Principle might enter, to commence its work?

4. It is also objected, “that the Test was originally framed against the Papists, when there were no Dissenters, and that therefore it ought not to operate against Dissenters.”

The Act in question directs; “*All* and *every* person—that shall bear any office—shall” &c. without exception, it seems, as to any description of men. And after examination made it is my persuasion, that the Bill was originally drawn as it is, that it might include *all* Dissenters from the Church-Establishment, as such; and also, that the Protestant-Dissenters of the time (for there were Protestant-



stant-Dissenters at the time) admitted that They, as well as the Papists, stood within the effect of it, and knew that the Legislature had yet, in no case, acted upon a principle of discriminating between them; that King William considered the Act in question, as affecting *all* Dissenters, as such; that the Legislature thought so too, at the time of passing the Toleration-Act, in which it repealed, by name, several penal Statutes, then existing against Protestant-Dissenters, but, by name also, excepted the Test-Act from repeal; and that, when the case of Protestant-Dissenters came again under the consideration of the Legislature, in the fifth year of George the first, part of the Occasional-Act and the whole Schism-Act were made void, but the Test-Act was, as it had been before, left in force.

It seems, then, that Protestant-Dissenters became subject to the Test, by no accidental inadvertence in the Legislature; but that it originally meant to place them, and from time to time understood them to stand, and at last designedly left them, under its operation. Of course, their argument against the Test, founded on supposition that it affects them but accidentally, can hardly appear of weight. And even if it did only *so* affect them, the question, as to the justice

and expediency of the thing would still remain to be decided, and the argument would conclude nothing.

5. It is also objected, that Toleration cannot be *complete*, without abolition of the Test.

The immediate aim of the Test is, as I observed before, to ascertain the simple fact, whether any given Christian is, or is not, of the Church of England. If the Test does not decide for him that he is of That Church, the consequence then is, not that he, and the Christian Sect of which he is a member, shall not be tolerated in the fullest exercise of Religious worship, but that he shall not hold possession of Civil Power. The Test itself cannot be understood to determine any thing, as to the treatment of the thing it detects; whether *that* is to be tolerated at all, or in what degree, is a question, with which the Test has nothing to do. It only decides *a fact*, but does not declare *the law*.

Toleration is one thing, and Establishment is another; and, that they may be what they are respectively, they must be kept distinct. The question then is, when Toleration is *complete*? For myself I must answer, that Toleration will then have the utmost it can have, when all, that is *not* granted to it, is a power to entrench on the Establishment. To  
fancy



fancy that Toleration implies *so much*, that Establishment itself can imply *no more*, is to incur confusion of ideas.

As far as I can perceive, any degree of Religious liberty, that is, any degree of Toleration, is compatible with any mode of ascertaining Eligibility to Civil Offices, that is, with any Test; and the One may stand *complete*, without the abolition of the Other,

6. It is also objected, that, under the Test, the services of many men, eminent in ability, are lost to the country.

As I admit the fact in no less an extent than any man can reasonably expect, I am among those that lament it. One thing, however, is to be observed—the question proceeds not more upon *Ability*, than upon its *Application*; and the detriment, to be sustained by the Publick from the loss of *the former*, must be estimated upon the forecast it is obliged to make respecting *the latter*. It is become now sufficiently clear, that to invest diversities of Sects with the direction of the Publick Authority and Power, is to open anew an accustomed and exhaustless source of Religious struggles and Civil confusions. Repeated and fatal experience has, at length, conducted the country to this settled determination, that there is *less* of political danger, in depriving itself of all

that Ability, which divers Sects might import into Publick Administration, than there would be, in risking that Application of it, which, it cannot but be presumed, they would severally make. Accordingly, only in justice to itself, it resolved rather to repel *a certain Evil*, than to embrace an *uncertain Good*. And happily, in the mean-while, it has incurred no want of Hands to render it flourishing, and to give it an exalted stand among the kingdoms of the earth.

7. It is also insinuated, that the Test is but an expedient in the hands of Church of England-men, for keeping possession of the stand they have obtained.

This is a most extraordinary nation, if, at this time of day, it is *the dupe* either of Churchmen or of Dissenters. It is without doubt sufficiently aware, that, if *the former* party is interested *for* the Test, in order to keep others *out*, *the latter* is no less interested *against* it, in order to push themselves *in*; and the Publick will accordingly apply the insinuation to *Both*, or to *Neither*. It would be for the interest and the honour of All Sides, to shew how convincingly they can reason, rather than how deeply they can hate. The Publick Interest is the rule for the treatment of all Interests, that are Particular; and if it happens,



happens, either that Particular Interests are coincident with That of the Publick, or, on the contrary, are incompatible with it, there is no more reason *to hate* them in the first case, than there is *to love* them in the second. How the country will be affected, if the present Establishment, in all its parts, be kept standing though with advantage to Some, or if it be new-modelled with advantage to Some others, is the real question, to which a virtuous and considerate patriot will attend.

8. It is further objected, that the Test is a Religious one.

Admitting it to be, as it certainly was, the intent of the Legislative Bodies, in framing the Test, to obtain unquestionable evidence that every man, bearing office, was of the Church of England, it would certainly be wisdom in them, not to undermatch the means to the end. But it would, as it seems to me, have amounted to a dereliction of their purpose, if they had enacted a Test, that was not Religious. That it went to ascertain real Communion, held with the Church of England, according to its usage and rites, was evidently a reason with the Dissenters in the House at the time, for considering the Test as effectual against the Papists. And, in fact, there is no criterion but  
that

that, which is likely to give the Act effect against any Separatists whatever. For can any man, after due consideration, say that a Test, purely Civil, would not, either have fallen short of that measure of evidence, which the point of the Legislature required, or have stood open to evasions, which a Religious one, as such, precludes? If neither can be said with truth, which appears the real case, it plainly follows, that the Legislature have acted wisely, in not putting into use a weapon without an edge; and that the Test, if it be not a Religious one, and if it evince not real Communion with the Established Church, which it was designed to preserve, will, in fact, be no Test at all.

9. It is objected particularly, that the Holy Sacrament is made the Test of Civil qualification.

The Test being designed to evince *real* Communion with the Church of England, could the Legislature determine, that *any number* of repeated attendances, at the places and times of Church of England-worship, should be construed as amounting to *sufficient* evidence? Even supposing this not to be impossible, it would manifestly fall short of the purpose; for every day's experience shews that Dissenters would not scruple *thus* to fulfil



fulfil the law as to the letter, but still without any *real* proof accruing, whether they were, or were not, Church of England-men. It only remained, that the Legislature should advert to that One Act of Christian worship, which is incomparably awful and interesting to All Christian parties, and which it was known that none of them, but One, ever did or would celebrate according to the usage of the Church of England. The single act, of having *so* received the Holy Sacrament, was accordingly fixed upon, as indisputable evidence of *real* Communion with that Church.

As the Law of Christ binds every Christian to receive the Holy Communion of His Body and Blood, the Law of the country presumes, that he will do so; and for itself says only, shew that you have done it, in a Parish-Church, and according to the usage of the Church Established in this realm, and that shall imply that you are of the Established Church. Does any man say that he would *not* receive it, had not the Law made it necessary for him to bring evidence of his having done it? Or does he say, that, as he eats and drinks unworthily, the profanation must lie with the Law? The answer may be made thus — no Laws can stand clear of objection, if occasion of making it is to be taken

taken from the *perverseness* or the *vices* of men. No Legislature, no man, ought to presume otherwise of any Christian, than that he makes so much conscience of the Law of Christ, as to be *willing*, and that he is not so far from Christian penitence, as to be *unworthy*, to communicate. Christian Government must treat Christians upon the principle, that they *would willingly*, and *might worthily*, comply with the Institution of Christ; and as to any thing in their *hearts*, or their *lives*, that may unfit them for doing so, it stands entirely innocent. To enact that he, who has received the Sacrament in the Church of England, shall be considered as a member of that Church, implies no conversion of our Lord's Institution into an instrument of the State; it implies no desecration of the most sacred thing in the world. The Legislature of this country has done no more; and is it to part with the best, and the only *real*, evidence, in a point of the utmost consequence to the Established Constitution, merely because *some* are so far from being good Christians, as to wish it out of their way? Pursue the principle; make all things a little more convenient, a little more easy, to the bad dispositions of men; and the whole fabrick of Legislation will tumble into ruins.

---

I know



I know of no further objections to the Test, but what are reducible to one or other of those heads, under which have been arranged the reflections I had to present. And after all, I cannot think it appears, that objections, urged against it, are of any such weight, as to induce a considerate man to regard it in any other light, than that of a just, a necessary, and effective fence for the Nation, from any encroaching danger to its Peace and Welfare in Civil Life, and its Ease and Liberty in Religion.

Thus, waving all that may be said for the Church of England, as Scriptural and Apostolical in Doctrine and Government, (however believing it sufficiently justifiable on those grounds) I have endeavoured to put my reader upon reflecting, that on reasons only *specious*, revived and refuted in every age, so momentous a thing is demanded, as that the Great Constitutional Barrier should be thrown down, and all within be laid open to the chances that may come; chances, of which the least unfavourable, and the least strong, will do much, in shattering that Frame of Publick Polity, Civil and Religious, which the Wisdom and Experience of ages have combined

to put together. As he cannot venerate it *too strongly*, my heart's hope is, that he will not consent to leave it guarded *feebly*.

Of every good Church of England-man it would be the first wish, to see all Dissenting Fellow-Christians at ease; it would be with him a second, to stand fully justified to his own mind, for viewing any object of their aim, in a light, different from that, in which he finds it appear to them. In the present instance, he might address them in something like the following language.

There is no Sword in the hand of the Church of England; there is none in your own: the Establishment entrenches not on the Religious Liberty of any among you, nor can you force it one from another. But which, of all the parties among you, will keep possession of it, if the demand, in which you, as I think, against your own respective interests, have joined, should prevail? Under no new posture of things, will you stand at so much ease in Religion, as you stand now—with respect to all plea on that head,  
since



since what you say seems to want ground, I think I may be sure, there is reason enough for your silence.

Upon your demand to stand eligible to Trusts of Executive Power, I must look to the Publick: for, against That, I dare not support *you*. On the side of That, there stands a Constitution in Church and State, planned, settled, perfected, by the truest publick Wisdom, and the longest publick Experience: by your small numbers it is indeed in part disliked; but to the great body of English people it is endeared, as a source of assured prosperity, and of blessings of every name. Under That, then, I see the Nation at rest; recovered, at length, from those convulsive agonies, under which some of you, contending for your several interests, had brought it; and safe from their return, as long as it can, and no longer than it can, hold you disabled from pushing a party, into the Councils and Administration of the country. To demands of yours, if I see them tending that way, as a man of Common Sense, Patriotism, and Humanity, I must say, No—and attempts, if any, on your part, to model either the Legislature, or the Borough, to your wishes, I feel myself bound to withstand.

As

I As a Church of England-man, I hold a Communion, which some of you say is *sinful*, and ought not to be protected by Law. Enough!—to wish your strength *less*, I am not induced by any Hatred of you—from wishing it *greater*, I am prevented by much Fear for myself.

5 0059



